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DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY
FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION

Columbia Gas Transmission, LLC

Docket No. PF15-31-000

NOTICE OF INTENT TO PREPARE AN
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT FOR THE PLANNED
MOUNTAINEER XPRESS PROJECT,
REQUEST FOR COMMENTS ON ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES
AND NOTICE OF PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING

The staff of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC or Commission) will prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) that will discuss the environmental impacts of the Mountaineer XPress Project (MXP) involving construction and operation of facilities by Columbia Gas Transmission, LLC (Columbia) in 14 counties in the western portion of West Virginia. The Commission will use this EIS in its decision-making process to determine whether the project is in the public convenience and necessity.

This notice announces the opening of the scoping process the Commission will use to gather input from the public and interested agencies on the project. You can make a difference by providing us with your specific comments or concerns about the project. Your comments should focus on the potential environmental effects, reasonable alternatives, and measures to avoid or lessen environmental impacts. Your input will help the Commission staff determine what issues they need to evaluate in the EIS. To ensure that your comments are timely and properly recorded, please send your comments so that the Commission receives them in Washington, DC **on or before December 17, 2015.**

If you sent comments on this project to the Commission **before** the opening of this docket on September 16, 2015, you will need to file those comments in Docket No. PF15-31-000 to ensure they are considered as part of this proceeding.

This notice is being sent to the Commission's current environmental mailing list for this project. State and local government representatives should notify their constituents of this planned project and encourage them to comment on their areas of concern.

If you are a landowner receiving this notice, a pipeline company representative may contact you about the acquisition of an easement to construct, operate, and maintain the planned facilities. The company would seek to negotiate a mutually acceptable

agreement. However, if the Commission approves the project, that approval conveys with it the right of eminent domain. Therefore, if easement negotiations fail to produce an agreement, the pipeline company could initiate condemnation proceedings where compensation would be determined in accordance with state law.

A fact sheet prepared by the FERC entitled “An Interstate Natural Gas Facility On My Land? What Do I Need To Know?” is available for viewing on the FERC website (www.ferc.gov). This fact sheet addresses a number of typically asked questions, including the use of eminent domain and how to participate in the Commission's proceedings.

Public Participation

For your convenience, there are four methods you can use to submit your comments to the Commission. The Commission will provide equal consideration to all comments received, whether filed in written form or provided verbally. The Commission encourages electronic filing of comments and has expert staff available to assist you at (202) 502-8258 or efiling@ferc.gov. Please carefully follow these instructions so that your comments are properly recorded.

- 1) You can file your comments electronically using the [eComment](#) feature on the Commission's website (www.ferc.gov) under the link to [Documents and Filings](#). This is an easy method for submitting brief, text-only comments on a project;
- 2) You can file your comments electronically by using the [eFiling](#) feature on the Commission's website (www.ferc.gov) under the link to [Documents and Filings](#). With eFiling, you can provide comments in a variety of formats by attaching them as a file with your submission. New eFiling users must first create an account by clicking on “[eRegister](#).” If you are filing a comment on a particular project, please select “Comment on a Filing” as the filing type; or
- 3) You can file a paper copy of your comments by mailing them to the following address. Be sure to reference the project docket number (PF15-31-000) with your submission:

Kimberly D. Bose, Secretary
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
888 First Street NE, Room 1A
Washington, DC 20426

- 4) In lieu of sending written or electronic comments, the Commission invites

you to attend one of the public scoping meetings its staff will conduct in the project area, scheduled as follows.

Schedule and Locations for the Mountaineer XPress Project Public Scoping Meetings

Date and Time	Location
Monday December 7, 2015 6:00 pm	The Lewis Wetzel Family Center 442 E. Benjamin Drive New Martinsville, WV 26149
Tuesday December 8, 2015 6:00 pm	Doddridge County Park – Main Lodge 1252 Snowbird Road West Union, WV 26456
Wednesday December 9, 2015 6:00 pm	Cedar Lake Conference Center – Assembly Hall 82 FFA Drive Ripley, WV 25271
Thursday December 10, 2015 6:00 pm	LaBelle Theater 311 D Street South Charleston, WV 25303

The doors will open at 5 p.m. at which time we will begin our sign up of speakers for the meetings. For the hour prior to the start of the meetings, Columbia representatives will be present with maps depicting the project and to answer questions.

The scoping meetings will begin at 6 p.m. with a description of our environmental review process by Commission staff, after which speakers will be called. The meetings will end once all speakers have provided their comments or at 10 p.m., whichever comes first. Please note that depending on the number of people signed up to speak, there may be a time limit of **3 minutes** to present comments, and speakers should structure their comments accordingly. If time limits are implemented, they will be strictly enforced to ensure that as many individuals as possible are given an opportunity to comment. The meetings will be recorded by a court reporter to ensure comments are accurately recorded. Transcripts will be entered into the formal record of the Commission proceeding.

Please note this is not your only public input opportunity; refer to the review process flow chart in appendix 1.¹

Summary of the Planned Project

Columbia plans to construct and operate approximately 167 miles of 36-inch and 24-inch-diameter pipeline; construct three new compressor stations and three regulator stations; and modify three existing compressor stations and other existing appurtenant facilities in West Virginia. The MXP would provide about 2.7 billion standard cubic feet per day of natural gas transportation capacity from production areas to markets on the Columbia system. According to Columbia, its project would enable infrastructure-constrained natural gas supplies to reach waiting markets served by Columbia's system. Columbia has entered into firm contracts for over 88 percent of the MXP capacity.

The MXP would consist of the following facilities:

- construction of 161.1 miles of new 36-inch-diameter pipeline and associated equipment (main-line valves, pigging facilities,² etc.), located in Marshall, Wetzel, Tyler, Doddridge, Ritchie, Calhoun, Wirt, Roane, Jackson, Mason, Putnam, and Cabell Counties, West Virginia;
- construction of 6.3 miles of 24-inch-diameter pipeline in Doddridge County (the Sherwood Lateral);
- construction of three new compressor stations and related equipment in Doddridge County (Sherwood Compressor Station), Ritchie County (White Oak Compressor Station), and Jackson County (Mt. Olive Compressor Station);
- construction of three new regulator stations and associated equipment in Marshall County (the Leach Interconnect), Doddridge County (Sherwood Lateral Regulator), and Cabell County (the Saunders Creek Tie-in);
- replacement of two sections of existing 30-inch-diameter pipeline, 1,295 feet and 814 feet in length, in Cabell County;
- installation of additional compression at the anticipated Lone Oak Compressor Station (Marshall County), Elk River Compressor Station (Wayne County), and Ceredo Compressor Station (Kanawha County) – all of which are under review in other Commission dockets; and

¹ The appendices referenced in this notice will not appear in the Federal Register. Copies of the appendices were sent to all those receiving this notice in the mail and are available at www.ferc.gov using the link called “eLibrary” or from the Commission’s Public Reference Room, 888 First Street NE, Washington, DC 20426, or call (202) 502-8371. For instructions on connecting to eLibrary, refer to the “Additional Information” section of this notice.

² A “pig” is a tool that the pipeline company inserts into and pushes through the pipeline for cleaning, conducting internal inspections, or other purposes.

- construction and/or installation of other related equipment.

The general location of the project facilities is shown in appendix 2.

Land Requirements for Construction

Columbia has proposed to use a 125-foot-wide right-of-way for construction of the new pipeline in upland areas, consisting of a 50-foot-wide permanent and a 75-foot-wide temporary right-of-way, except where site conditions require specific workspace configurations. Temporary right-of-way used during construction would be restored and revert to former uses once construction is completed. However, the permanent right-of-way would be maintained for permanent operation of the MXP.

Additional temporary workspace would be required at road, utility lines, and waterbody crossings; steep slopes; side slopes; horizontal directional drill locations; and at the beginning and end of construction spreads for mobilizing construction equipment. Disturbance would also result from the use of staging areas and construction of new and/or upgrading of existing access roads associated with construction and operation of the planned facilities.

The pipeline would be sited to follow existing pipeline, utility, and road rights-of-way to the maximum extent practicable.

The EIS Process

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires the Commission to take into account the environmental impacts that could result from an action whenever it considers the issuance of a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity. NEPA also requires us³ to discover and address concerns the public may have about proposals. This process is referred to as scoping. The main goal of the scoping process is to focus the analysis in the EIS on the important environmental issues. By this notice, the Commission requests public comments on the scope of the issues to address in the EIS. We will consider all filed comments during the preparation of the EIS.

In the EIS, we will discuss impacts that could occur as a result of the construction and operation of the planned project under these general headings:

- geology and soils;
- land use;

³ “We,” “us,” and “our” refer to the environmental staff of the Commission’s Office of Energy Projects.

- water resources, fisheries, and wetlands;
- cultural resources;
- vegetation and wildlife;
- socioeconomics;
- air quality and noise;
- endangered and threatened species;
- public safety; and
- cumulative impacts.

We will also evaluate possible alternatives to the planned project or portions of the project, and make recommendations on how to lessen or avoid impacts on the various resource areas.

Although no formal application has been filed, we have already initiated our NEPA review under the Commission's pre-filing process. The purpose of the pre-filing process is to encourage early involvement of interested stakeholders and to identify and resolve issues before the FERC receives an application. As part of our pre-filing review, we have begun to contact some federal and state agencies to discuss their involvement in the scoping process and the preparation of the EIS.

The EIS will present our independent analysis of the issues. We will publish and distribute the draft EIS for public comment. After the comment period, we will consider all timely comments and revise the document, as necessary, before issuing a final EIS. To ensure we have the opportunity to consider and address your comments, please carefully follow the instructions in the Public Participation section, beginning on page 2.

With this notice, we are asking agencies with jurisdiction by law and/or special expertise with respect to the environmental issues related to this project to formally cooperate with us in the preparation of the EIS.⁴ Agencies that would like to request cooperating agency status should follow the instructions for filing comments provided under the Public Participation section of this notice. Currently, the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection has expressed its intention to participate as a cooperating agency in the preparation of the EIS to provide special expertise on environmental issues related to this project.

Consultations Under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act

In accordance with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation's implementing regulations for section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, we are using this

⁴ The Council on Environmental Quality regulations addressing cooperating agency responsibilities are at Title 40, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 1501.6.

notice to initiate consultation with the applicable State Historic Preservation Office(s), and to solicit their views and those of other government agencies, interested Indian tribes, and the public on the project's potential effects on historic properties.⁵ We will define the project-specific Area of Potential Effects (APE) in consultation with the SHPO(s) as the project develops. On natural gas facility projects, the APE at a minimum encompasses all areas subject to ground disturbance (examples include construction right-of-way, contractor/pipe storage yards, compressor stations, and access roads). Our EIS for this project will document our findings on the impacts on historic properties and summarize the status of consultations under section 106.

Currently Identified Environmental Issues

We have already identified several issues that we think deserve attention based on a preliminary review of the planned facilities and the environmental information provided by Columbia. This preliminary list of issues may change based on your comments and our analysis.

- removal of forested areas;
- impacts on endangered and threatened species that not covered under Columbia's Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan;
- changes to existing land uses; and
- safety of landowners during the operation of the proposed pipeline.

Environmental Mailing List

The environmental mailing list includes federal, state, and local government representatives and agencies; elected officials; environmental and public interest groups; Native American Tribes; other interested parties; and local libraries and newspapers. This list also includes all affected landowners (as defined in the Commission's regulations) who are potential right-of-way grantors, whose property may be used temporarily for project purposes, or who own homes within certain distances of aboveground facilities, and anyone who submits comments on the project. We will update the environmental mailing list as the analysis proceeds to ensure that we send the information related to this environmental review to all individuals, organizations, and government entities interested in and/or potentially affected by the planned project.

Copies of the completed draft EIS will be sent to the environmental mailing list for public review and comment. **If you would prefer to receive a paper copy of the**

⁵ The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation regulations are at Title 36, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 800. Those regulations define historic properties as any prehistoric or historic district, site, building, structure, or object included in or eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

document instead of the CD version or would like to remove your name from the mailing list, please return the attached Information Request (appendix 3).

Becoming an Intervenor

Once Columbia files its application with the Commission, you may want to become an “intervenor” which is an official party to the Commission’s proceeding. Intervenor play a more formal role in the process and are able to file briefs, appear at hearings, and be heard by the courts if they choose to appeal the Commission's final ruling. An intervenor formally participates in the proceeding by filing a request to intervene. Motions to intervene are more fully described at <http://www.ferc.gov/resources/guides/how-to/intervene.asp>. Instructions for becoming an intervenor are in the “Document-less Intervention Guide” under the “e-filing” link on the Commission’s website. Please note that the Commission will not accept requests for intervenor status at this time. You must wait until the Commission receives a formal application for the project.

Additional Information

Additional information about the project is available from the Commission's Office of External Affairs at **(866) 208-FERC** or on the FERC website (www.ferc.gov) using the eLibrary link. Click on the eLibrary link, click on “General Search” and enter the docket number, excluding the last three digits in the Docket Number field (i.e., PF15-31-000). Be sure you have selected an appropriate date range. For assistance, please contact FERC Online Support at FercOnlineSupport@ferc.gov or toll free at (866) 208-3676, or for TTY, contact (202) 502-8659. The eLibrary link also provides access to the texts of formal documents issued by the Commission, such as orders, notices, and rulemakings.

In addition, the Commission offers a free service called eSubscription which allows you to keep track of all formal issuances and submittals in specific dockets. This can reduce the amount of time you spend researching proceedings by automatically providing you with notification of these filings, document summaries, and direct links to the documents. Go to www.ferc.gov/docs-filing/esubscription.asp.

Finally, public meetings or site visits will be posted on the Commission’s calendar located at www.ferc.gov/EventCalendar/EventsList.aspx along with other related information.

DATED: November 18, 2015

Nathaniel J. Davis, Sr.,
Deputy Secretary.

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